

Suisun Marsh Levee Investigation Public Workshop
March 6, 2000 from 6:30-9:00 PM at the Solano County Office of Education

Notes from the Question and Answer Session:

Q: How does the CALFED effort relate to the North Delta Wildlife Refuge "59,000 acre effort"?

A: Terry answered that the efforts are not the same but some acquisition would contribute to the CALFED goals. Steve provided most of the response to this and said it did not link to Suisun Marsh efforts and that the proposal had been scaled down to about 25, 000 acres.

Q: How is the effect of the Montezuma Wetlands Project being worked into the modeling? There was also a recommendation to check the modeling results against the effects of real breaches in the field and a recommendation to do a modeling of the Montezuma Wetlands Project.

A: Kamyar mentioned that they don't have funds to model Montezuma. He mentioned that the Montezuma project involves raising some of the bottom elevations and will include a channel system, so there may not be as much opportunity for tidal prism reduction. He wondered how they planned to maintain levees and suggested that Levine and Fricke should model Montezuma Wetlands.

Q: Will there be less hunting area and an increase in sanctuary in the Marsh?

A: Terry mentioned that this would need to be looked at and depends on whether land is acquired under conservation easements or State/Federal ownership.

Q: Are the ERP acreage goals fixed?

A: Terry mentioned that CALFED has a programmatic document and will seek to use adaptive management and pilot studies to further guide efforts. It will be desirable to implement in smaller chunks and see if the strategies work.

Q: Has a small scale effort been proven to work? Do we have an example? Also, is there an argument between the merits of managed wetlands versus tidal marsh?

A: We are using the best available science.

Q: How do you maintain a wetland once a levee has been breached?

A: Terry cited examples of other cases and mentioned that it is something that needs to be addressed.

Q: Do we want tidal marsh or shallow water habitat or a combination of both?

A: Terry mentioned both and clarified the definitions. Steve mentioned the "Rush Ranch" example (an area off of Suisun Slough) and noted that it would have little or no value to waterfowl habitat. He mentioned that there will be loss but it is visionary to consider the big picture now.

Comment: A participant mentioned that 30 years ago Ryer Island was converted to wetlands and should be looked at as an example.

Response: Terry mentioned that CALFED has sponsored a "breach study" for other areas within the Delta that have flooded as a result of past breaches including Ryer Island and agreed that we should look at Ryer.

Q: The owner of the Sunrise Club mentioned that they have a breach and lost 4000 feet of levee. He has been seeking aid from Agencies and running into dead ends and wondered what he could do?

A: Rob mentioned that this illustrates that a program which includes effective emergency response (to keep this type of situation from occurring) should be part of the solution.

Q: If we are doing research with experts, why haven't we taken advantage of what's going on? Why don't we look at DFG land that they say they can't maintain?

A: Terry mentioned that one area of guidance will be to look at Federal and State owned lands as a first step to see if the existing uses are appropriate, but noted that not all areas are suitable. Steve mentioned that there is a proposal on DFG land currently for tidal conversion on State property (across from the Jack in the Box near the city of Suisun) and that it would contribute towards the goals number.

Comment: There was a comment that some clubs would sell and some landowners would be reluctant. CALFED should show people who don't want to sell what we are willing to put into a program before people will consider it.

Q: What does a tule habitat do for the list of 12 endangered species?

A: Terry mentioned that the MSCS creates obligations for CALFED for certain species. Some of those species depend on cattails, such as the Suisun Song Sparrow. It will be necessary to look at what kinds of species will benefit from certain kinds of habitat.

Q: A participant mentioned that there was a confusion because it seemed earlier we mentioned that breaches would hurt WQ and then we talked about how breaches would be good?

A: Terry explained the difference between the results of different breach scenarios and mentioned that there is a fine balance between small and large breaches.

Comment: A participant mentioned that WQ is a concern and that to control salinity, we will need infrastructure. He wonders if they can trust CALFED to put together a package and pull through- They want CALFED to come up with something that will provide assurance.

A: Rob mentioned that that would be the goal of a package.

Q: A participant questioned what would happen to the WQ at Morrow Island. He also mentioned that he has seen the sloughs silt in and that the Marsh is a leach field and without dredging sloughs it is hard to leach. He wants to see dredging. He also mentioned that didn't want to see the effort be divisive for the landowners.

A: Kamyar showed the Morrow Island salinity results. He mentioned that DWR got involved in the effort because of infrastructure and WQ standards, so they are interested

in maintenance. He also mentioned that although we modeled contiguous areas, we would not get the same results with smaller areas as with the "regions" that were set up.

Q: What is the minimum size of a test area? 40 acre?

A: No exact size was given but it was mentioned that generally the less the area inundated, the lesser the volume and less impact.

Q: How can we breach 100 feet and maintain it? Especially if we are not able to dredge?

A: Kamyar mentioned that the levees would have to be armored at the breach. Interior levees would have to deal with more exposure and would have to be armored like exterior levees. Kamyar mentioned that this would be part of the project and noted that Prospect Island has done this.

Comment: That was a comment that work on the AB360 Suisun levees has been held up by CALFED.

A: Rob mentioned that he wrote a letter indicating that maintaining this area is consistent with CALFED's current efforts.

Q: How many acres would you have to have to have an option? What would we do with the rest of the areas?

A: We don't have these answers yet.

Q: How much money is CALFED talking about for levees?

A: Rob mentioned that the State has spent 108 million on the Delta in the past 10 years. Steve mentioned that the money the Suisun owners are currently spending could be leveraged.

After the meeting, it was noted that there is a general landowner concern about localized WQ impacts for neighbors of parcels that go to tidal wetlands.